

JAYANTABHAṬṬA AND THE VEDAS*

By

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For many years it was my privilege to know Dr. I. J. S. Taraporewalla as a great Vedic scholar who had the rare ability to approach Vedic problems with a very thorough Avestan back-ground. He had read carefully much of what I have written about the Veda and offered me very valuable advice from time to time. To this Volume dedicated to his memory I can do no better than offer a paper which, were he alive, would have brought me his learned comments.

Professedly the *Nyāyamañjarī* of Jayantabhaṭṭa is only a gloss (*vṛtti*) on select Nyāya aphorisms of Gautama, but it is really an independent treatise whose object is to establish the supremacy of the Nyāya view in contemporary thought. As a result the work takes upon an encyclopaedic character and may even be looked upon as a sort of medieval history of Indian Religion and philosophy.

An early aphorism¹ of Gautama is Jayantabhaṭṭa's opportunity to expound some of his very valuable views on Vedic literature. It is not possible to consider all these views within the length of the present paper. I select for consideration now only *two* of them, the one concerned with the authorship of the Veda and the other with the place of the *Atharva* among the *four* Vedas.

Now, the authorship of the Vedas is one of those subjects where opinion is sharply divided between modern scholars and those that go by the name of traditionalists; the latter believe that the Vedas have really no author at all and, if each hymn or group of hymns is associated with the name of a *Rṣi*, it is only because that particular *Rṣi* 'saw' or 'discovered' it; according to the former, 'seeing or discovering' a hymn is only a euphemism for 'composition' and the Veda, as an aggregate of the compositions of a large number of *Rṣis*, is of collective authorship.

* In a summarized form this paper was submitted to the XVIII All-India Oriental Conference, Chidambaram, December 1955. The following abbreviations are used by me in this paper :—

AV	= Atharvaveda	NS	= Nyāya Sūtras of Gautama
Ch.Up.	= Chāndogya Upaniṣad	RV	= Rgveda
GPB	= Gopatha Brāhmaṇa	ŚB	= Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa
MB	= Vyākaraṇa Mahābhāṣya of Patañjali	TB	= Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa
MMS	= Mīmāṃsā Sūtras of Jaimini	TS	= Taittirīya Saṃhitā
MN	= Mahānārāyaṇa Upaniṣad	VP	= Viṣṇu Purāṇa
MS	= Manu Smṛti	VS	= Vaiśeṣika Sūtras of Kaṇāda
NM	= Nyāyamañjarī of Jayantabhaṭṭa	YS	= Yājñavalkya Smṛti.

1. *Nyāyasūtra*, I.1.7.

Jayantabhaṭṭa, as a true Naiyāyika, is naturally as averse as the modern scholar to the theory of the authorlessness of the Veda, a theory which, to him, has its origin only in the fancy of the Mīmāṃsakas. It is Jayantabhaṭṭa's firm view that, as a verbal composition, the Veda must have an author and in this respect it cannot be different from any other literary work (*Vaidikyo racanāḥ kartṛpūrvikāḥ racanātvāt laukikaracanaṅvat*).² If the Mīmāṃsaka would have³ that the Veda, as a text orally learnt from a teacher (*gurvadhyayanapūrvaka*) is really beginningless (*anādi*), it can be pointed out that the case of the Mahābhārata is not different. If the Mahābhārata has its author in Kṛṣṇadvaipāyana *alias* Pārāśarya, so has the Veda in Prajāpati. Prajāpati cannot be distinguished as an invisible author because no one alive now nor any of his immediate ancestors has ever seen Dvaipāyana:⁴

अथ प्रणेता वेदस्य न दृष्टः केन चित्क चित् ।
द्वैपायनोऽपि किं दृष्टो भवत्पितृपितामहैः ॥

And it is no valid reason to adduce to say⁵ that the Veda cannot have an author as no one remembers him (*asmāyamāṇakartṛkatva*). Is it ever conceivable asks Jayantabhaṭṭa,⁶ that there can exist, by itself, an arrangement of words without a human agency ? :

न हि पुरुषमन्तरेण क चिदक्षरविन्यासो दृष्टः ।
भो भगवन्तः सभ्याः केदं दृष्टं क वा श्रुतं लोके ॥
यद्वाक्येषु पदानां रचना नैसर्गिकी भवति ॥
यदि स्वाभाविकी वेदे पदानां रचना भवेत् ।
पटे हि हन्त तन्तूनां कथं नैसर्गिकी न सा ॥

As an arrangement of words, there can be no difference between *Śaṁ no devīr abhiṣṭaya* on the one hand and *Nārāyaṇam namaskṛtya* or *Asty uttarasyām diśi devatātmā* on the other. If, inspite of all these arguments, the Mīmāṃsakas still see a speciality in the Vedic sentence and adduce the reputation (*yaśas*) they enjoy among the orthodox, the Naiyāyika can only say he can find no valid reason for this preposterous theory :

मीमांसका यशः पिबन्तु पयो वा पिबन्तु बुद्धिजाड्यापनयनाय
ब्राह्मीघृतं वा पिबन्तु वेदस्तु पुरुषप्रणीत एव नात्र भ्रान्तिः ॥

As a text the Veda may have a special status as compared with the *Mahābhārata* or *Kumārasambhava*. To maintain this status it is not at all necessary for the Veda to be authorless ; a *special* work can have a *special* author (*yad*

2. NM., I. 213.

3. *Ibid.*, I. 214.

4. NM., I. 214.

5. *Ibid.*, I. 215 f.

6. *Ibid.*, I. 216.

vilakṣaṇeyam racanā tad vilakṣaṇa eva kartā'numīyatām).⁷ Even in the case of popular works whose authors are known, each work has its own distinctive value. Soaked in honey, smeared with the cool paste of the sandal and pulverized by the rays of the Moon are the sweet words of Kālidāsa⁸ :

अमृतेनेव संसिक्ताश्चन्दनेनेव रचिताः ।

चन्द्रांशुभिरिवोद्घृष्टाः कालिदासस्य सूक्तयः ॥

And Bāṇa bewitches all other poets by his sparkling words arrayed dexterously so as to yield rich meaning suiting each particular context (*prakaṭarasā-nugūṇavikaṭāḥṣararacanācamatkāritasakalakavikulā bāṇasya vācaḥ*).⁹

If, like Pāṇini or Piṅgala, this special author is not also well-known, it is either because of the extreme antiquity of the composition of the veda (*Vedakaraṇakā-lasyātīdaviyastvāt*) or of the peculiarity of the body of this being as compared with that of all ordinary human beings (*sakalapuruṣavilakṣaṇatvāt*). But His existence cannot be denied for He is known by Inference (*Anumāna*) and Verbal Testimony (*Āgama*).¹⁰ Even as the weaver can be inferred by looking at the cloth woven by him, so is the author of the Veda known by looking at it :¹¹

पटादिरचनां दृष्ट्वा तस्य चेत्साऽनुमीयते ।

वेदेऽपि रचनां दृष्ट्वा कर्तृत्वं तस्य गम्यताम् ॥

Since a composition like the Veda can be the work only of an omniscient (*Sarvajña*) Person, this author is no other than God (*Īśvara*) who created elements like the Earth (*yenaiva kartrā prthivyādikāryam nirmītam*).¹² And even as *Īśvara* could create the entire variegated Universe single-handed, so did He compose all the four Vedas, Rg, Yajus, Sāma and Atharva, which are all concerned with the same religious act (*Karma*)¹³ :

कर्त्ता या एव जगतामखिलात्मवृत्ति-

कर्मप्रपञ्चपरिपाकविचित्रताज्ञः ।

विश्वात्मना तदुपदेशपराः प्रणीता-

स्तेनैव वेदरचना इति युक्तमेतत् ॥

To those who would accept the authority of the Vedas but make an exception¹⁴ in the case of the *Atharvaveda* on the ground that it is outside the pale of the

7. NM., I. 216.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 217.

9. *Ibid.*

10. *Ibid.*, p. 217 f.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 218.

12. NM., I. 218-219.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 220.

14. *Ibid.*, pp. 231 f.; for elaboration on this point see H. G. Narahari, *Indian Culture*, 1940, VI. 369 ff.

Trayī, a group recognised both by *Śruti*¹⁵ and *Smṛti*¹⁶, Jayantabhaṭṭa would point out that their attitude is wholly improper; when Jaimini¹⁷ propounded the infallibility of the Vedas or when both Kaṇāda¹⁸ and Akṣapāda¹⁹ made a similar declaration they meant all the *four* Vedas; the Mīmāṃsakas cannot say that the Atharvaveda is not authoritative because it is of known authorship; nor can the Naiyāyikas hold, in a similar way, that only the *three* Vedas are the pronouncements of an *Āpta*, not the Atharvaveda also.

Further, there are a number of passages²⁰ in the *Śruti* as well as *Smṛti* which recognise the importance of the Atharvaveda. The TS.²¹ refers to the Atharvaveda saying: “*Tvām agne puṣkarād adhy atharvā nir amanthata.*” The ŚB.²² contains the statement “*So’yam ātharvaṇo vedah.*” And the Ch. Up.²³ says that Atharvan is the *fourth* Veda (*ātharvaṇaḥ caturthaḥ*). To the MS.²⁴ the Atharvaveda is as much a *Śruti* as any of the three other Vedas. When the YS.²⁵ mentions the fourteen branches of Knowledge (*vidyāsthānāni*), it takes into account *four* Vedas, not merely *three*. The VP.²⁶ is more explicit when it mentions the four Vedas (*vedāḥ catvāraḥ*) in the course of its enumeration of the varieties of knowledge (*Vidyā*).

Certain traditional writers of eminence like Patañjali and Śabara seem to step aside from the general group which looks upon the Atharvaveda with disfavour; in citing samples from the four Vedas, the former cites²⁷ first from the Atharvaveda; and Śabara cites often²⁸ from the *Maudaka* and the *Paippalāda* śākhās of the Atharvaveda.

Nor can it be maintained that the AV. teaches not the sacrificial cult that is the main theme of the three other Vedas and that it consequently deserves its divorce from the pale of the *Trayī*. In the performance of sacrificial rites like *Iṣṭi*, *Paśu*, *Ekāha*, *Ahīna* and *satra* the teachings of this Veda have seldom been

15. RV., X.90.9; TB., III.12.9.1; ŚB., X.5.8.1-3; MN., XII. 2.

16. MS., III. 145.

17. MMS., I. 1.5.

18. VS., I. 1.3.

19. NS., II.1.67.

20. For an enumeration of all passages cited by the NM in this connection, see H. G. Narahari, *Indian Culture*, VI. 371 ff.

21. III. 5.11.3a.

22. cited by NM., *loc. cit.*

23. VII.7.

24. XI.33.

25. I.3.

26. III.6. 28.

27. MB., p. 5 (Benares Edn.); Patañjali's partiality to the Atharvaveda is further evidenced by the fact that he cites almost exclusively from this Veda and its ancillary texts. It is a fact that is familiar to Sanskrit grammarians that Pāṇini favours the *Rgveda*, *Kātyāyana*, the *Yajurveda* and Patañjali the Atharvaveda. Patañjali's leaning towards the AV. is sometimes taken to signify that he is an Atharvavedin; if this is true, there is greater reason to regard Jayantabhaṭṭa as an Atharvavedin since his favour to the AV. is, as the present paper shows, quite explicit.

28. On Jaimini, MMS., I. 1. 27; II. 4. 2.

neglected. There is no sacrificial rite that can proceed unless the different shades of opinion found in the different Śākhās are taken into consideration.²⁹

It may, however, be argued that the AV. need not be consulted as the *Hotṛ* priest is expected to be proficient in the Ṛgveda, the *Adhvaryu* in the Yajurveda and the *Udgātṛ* in the Sāmaveda when rites like the Soma-sacrifice are performed. But it is necessary to remember that the Brahṁā-priest must consult the AV. so that he may be able to perform his duties (*atharvavedena brahmatvasya karaṇāt*)³⁰ In the GPB³¹ it is stated that Prajāpati employed four priests, the *Hotṛ*, knowing the Ṛgveda, the *Adhvaryu*, knowing the Yajurveda, the *Udgātṛ*, knowing the Sāmaveda, and the *Brahman*, knowing the Atharvaveda, when he performed the Soma-sacrifice, and that, if any one of these four priests is omitted the sacrifice will be faulty (*yajño riṣyati*). Elsewhere³² in the same Brāhmaṇa it is stated that if, in a sacrifice, anything should go wrong, that can be remedied by the Atharvaveda (*yajñe yad ūnam ca viriṣṭam ca yātayāmanam ca karoti tad atharvaṇām tejasā āpyāyayati*) and that the Brahṁā-priest can do this by virtue of his knowledge of this Veda.³³

All these practices cannot be dismissed as special to the followers of the AV. with which the followers of the *Trayi-vidyā* have nothing to do. For the *Trayi-vidyā* is nothing more than the *Ṛg*, *Yajus* and *Sāma* put together; and since the AV. contains passages from all these three Vedas, it has the right to be the text of the *Brahman* in a sacrifice. Should it, however, be argued that there is no necessity for a whole the parts of which can subsist separately, the reply is that the AV. is not a mere compilation of the other Vedas, but contains in it the essence of all of them (*trayyāḥ śukraṁ bhavati*)³⁴ and as such cannot be replaced; it is for this reason that it is often³⁵ called the *Brahma-Veda*, the Veda of the *Brahṁā-priest*.

As for the claims of the *Atharva* for the name *Veda*, there is enough evidence even in ordinary parlance;³⁶ when one classifies the Vedic literature into *Samhitā* and *Brāhmaṇa* he understands the AV. also by the first division; also if a man says that he has studied the Atharvaveda among the Vedas, none of his hearers blame him for giving the appellative Veda to the AV. True, the science of medicine (*Āyurveda*) is also called a Veda; but the subject-matter of the AV. is akin to that contained in the other Samhitās and, like any of them, it also treats of *Brahma-yajña* and other Śrauta rites.³⁷ Yājñavalkya,³⁸ for instance, says that the brahmin

29. NM., I. 234 ff.

30. *Ibid.*,

31. I. 2.24.

32. cited in NM., p. 235.

33. GPB., pp. 106 ff. (Bibliotheca Indica Edn.).

34. NM., I. 236.

35. GPB, I. 2.16.

36. NM., I. 237.

37. *Ibid.*

38. YS., I. 1.44.

who studies the Atharvāṅgiras satisfies the gods with fat (*medas*) and the manes with honey and clarified butter (*pitṛīmś ca madhusarpibhyām.*)

It is thus evident that, as a work the authority of which is to be acknowledged, as a Vedic text which is useful for self-study (*svādhyāya*) and finally, as an instrument to secure the *summum bonum* of life, the AV. is on a par with any other text in the Vedic canon (*tena pramāṇatāyām vedasvādhyāyaśabdavācyaṭve puruṣārthasādhanaṭvīdhāv api catvāraḥ samā vedāḥ*).³⁹ If it is necessary to make any distinction among the Vedas, the first place must perforce go to the AV. which contains⁴⁰ the great *mantra* with which Brahman performed his primeval *pranava*. Also, while those initiated according to the AV. are at liberty to study any one of the other Vedas, others, who have not gone through Atharvavedic initiation, have no right to study the AV.⁴¹

In reality, there is nothing like a private or an exclusive rite of a single Veda, for each single rite is based on the authority of all the branches of the Vedic canon. It is only those who are not afraid of the consequence of scoffing at a Vedic text that would think of making distinctions therein (*prīthak karaṇam vedanindāprāyaścittanirbhayadhiyām eva cetasi parisphurati*).⁴² Four are the branches of the Vedic tree, each one having numerous offshoots, radiant with countless flowers and fruits whose extremely sweet juice is drunk deeply by the eager mouth of the priestly singer⁴³ :

चतुःस्कन्धोपेतः प्रथितपृथगर्थैरवयवैः
कृतान्योन्यश्लेषैरुपचितवपुर्वेदविष्णुः ।

प्रतिस्कन्धं शाखाफलकुसुमसंदर्भसुभगाः
प्रकाशन्ते तस्य द्विजमुखनिपीतोत्तमरसाः ॥

39. NM., I. 237.

40. GPB., I. 2.16.

41. NM., *loc. cit.*

42. NM., I. 239.

43. *Ibid.*